

munities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under current flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.¹

In short, modern writers of history were not merely partial but dull and superficial. They confined themselves to relating political events, and neglected social changes and social facts. They told only half the story, and they told that badly. History ought to be written in a more artistic and a more interesting way ; the received conception of its province ought to be widened so as to include the life of the people as well as the fortunes of its rulers. Macaulay closes his essay by drawing the character of the ideal his-

torian.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed;

¹ Edinburgh Review, May 1828, pp. 362-3.